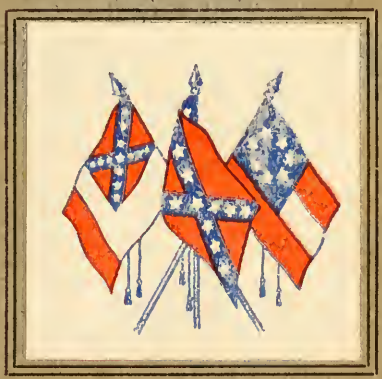
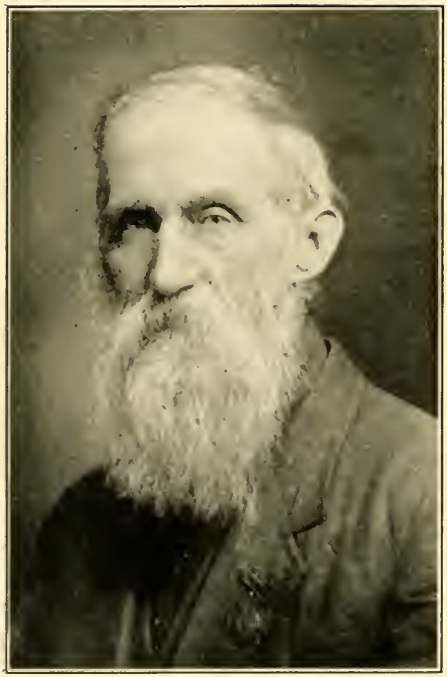
E 605
.K52
Copy 1

MY EXPERIENCE
In The Confederate Army
and in
Northern Prisons



WRITTEN FROM MEMORY
BY
JOHN R. KING, ROANOKE, W. VA.
February 23, 1916



JOHN R. KING

MY EXPERIENCE
In The Confederate Army
and in
Northern Prisons

WRITTEN FROM MEMORY
BY
JOHN R. KING

STONEWELL JACKSON CHAPTER
No. 1333
UNITED DAUGHTERS OF CONFEDERACY
CLARKSBURG, W. VA.

Copyrighted 1917

E 660
.K52

©CLA470105

JUL 25 1917

mew jc 28 '17.

PREFACE.

I want to explain why I am writing this little sketch. In the first place I have never seen anything written about life in Northern Prisons and have al ways had a great desire that the world be better informed regarding the treatment of prisoners during the war. No doubt many of my comrades in prison could have written about our prison life much better than I, but it seems none of them have ever made the attempt. My own children and grandchildren have often expressed a desire that I write my experience, and last but not least, I can say the real cause of my undertaking such a thing is that my cousin, Mrs. George C. Stone, of Clarksburg, President of the Stonewall Jackson Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, has desired me to write something of this nature for their chapter; this I have done to the best of my ability and will cheerfully give it into the hands of their Historian, hoping that it may have something in it worthy of publication.

Being a carpenter by trade I can use a saw and square much better than I can a pen, but in writing this there is one particular thing which has helped me more than anything else, and that is, I have an excellent memory. This is a blessing to me. I could have written a great deal more from memory, but have written only some of the most important happenings. Many things happened every day in the army and in the prisons of which I might have spoken and which would be new to the younger people. I could have told how we built breastworks, how we fortified and picketed along the Rapidan, how pickets were captured on post and how, while we were building breastworks at Germania Fort, there was a religious revival going on behind us in the pine woods. I could have told about our camping on the

Chancellorsville Battlefield, walking over the ground where our beloved Stonewall Jackson fell and how we saw human skulls and human bones bleaching on top of the ground. I might have told of many painful sights on battlefields in the midst of shot and shell and mangled human beings, of death bed scenes in prison, meetings and partings on battlefields, of messages to loved ones at home and many other minor happenings, but it was too much of an undertaking for my awkard pen and so I ended with my return home. If all who were in the war and in the various prisoners were to write their experiences, there would be much work for the publishers.

There have been all sorts or reports abroad ever since the Civil War in regard to the feeding and general treatment of Southern prisoners in Northern Prisons and I will say here, as I said before, I was one of these prisoners for more than a year and what I have stated in this little sketch is all from actual experience and from my own observation; it is absolutely true.

I could have made our sufferings and many other things which I mentioned a great deal blacker and more bitter, but my aim has been to give everyone all the credit they deserve, for I feel a number of our officers in charge of the prisons had the welfare of the prisoners at heart; however, they were in a position where they could not prevent our suffering. I have often looked back over the period just after the close of the war when the poor confederate soldiers were sent home to face the world without money, often without credit and with but few clothes. They were not allowed to vote, had to pay taxes, could expect no pension, often crippled. It was a gloomy outlook, but I have lived to see the confederate veterans honored everywhere, thousands of them have fine homes of their own, they are surrounded with the comforts of life, our dear old southland has come to the front and has prospered beyond what the fondest heart ever expected to see. I have had a great desire ever since the close of the Civil War that people in

general and my own children in particular might be better informed regarding the South and the Southern side of the Civil War. In this little sketch I have endeavored to uphold our Southern side and to create a respect for the South and for Southern people as I do at all times. None have ever done more in uplifting the South and creating a universal respect for her people than the noble Southern women. In all ages women have been heroic in war and in suffering and I can say in truth that our own dear Southern women bore their share of privations and suffering with a heroism born in the South and it does my heart good to speak of our dear children, the Daughters of the Confederacy, who have pledged the best of their lives and have banded together for the good work of uplifting and aiding the South, caring for our old veterans, their widows and orphans. Surely God will reward them for their unselfish work and I will pray that God may protect everyone of them and bless them in all their efforts.

Finally, to my honored cousin Mrs. George C. Stone, I respectfully present this little sketch and sincerely hope that she may find something in this that may be suitable for publication.

John R. King,
Roanoke, W. Va.,
February, 1916.

MY EXPERIENCE IN THE CONFEDERATE ARMY AND IN NORTHERN PRISONS

WRITTEN FROM MEMORY

I was not lucky in having an education, but will try to the best of my ability to write of some experiences in the Civil War.

To begin with I was born in Marion Co., Virginia, on the 8th day of April, 1842. Brother Cyrus was born in the same County on the 5th day of December, 1838. My father moved from Marion to Upsher Co., Va., in April, 1861. We were Democrats, but my father was a Union man until Virginia seceded. Being a loyal son of the Old Dominion State he then became one of the South, and there-by suffered for his loyalty to the good old Mother State. The majority of the people of Upsher County were loyal to the North. Sometimes we were looked on with suspicion and often insulted. Once my brother Cyrus was mobbed at the church door; also stoned and in July, 1862, my father, brother Cyrus and myself were hoeing cane at home when we saw one of our neighbors and a few Yankee Soldiers coming towards us. They surrounded us, took us with some others to Buckhannon before Gen. Rosecrans, and compelled us to take the oath of allegiance to the United States; one can easily see that we were never safe at home.

Early in May, 1863, Cyrus and I started for Dixie. It was hard for us to leave kind parents, good brothers and sisters. We went by way of Beverly, W. Va., and others joined us making in all ten bound for Dixie. One big fellow was a Confederate Soldier and carried a Belgian rifle. A short distance from Beverly we met a Yankee cavalryman. One of our

boys whom we had sent a little distance in advance said a few words to the man, then came back to inform us that we were in danger. We hastened to the mountains and a few minutes later we saw about 175 horse-men come thundering down out of Beverly. We hurried up the hill and the Yankees were not far behind us. Fortunately the top of the hill had been fortified, they had cut down the bushes and thrown all the brush across a deep sharp ravine making a fine, heavy covering for it. Upon seeing this secluded spot we all crept in and were completely hidden from view. Many of the soldiers came very close to where we lay, but we were quiet in our narrow quarters. They soon disappeared and then we went a few miles into the woods, came down the pike and stayed all night at Mr. Crawford's. The next day we went to Mr. White's who lived on the top of Cheat Mountain; then we went to Yeager's on the top of the Allegheny mountains, the next day to Monterey, Highland Co., Va., and stayed there about a week. We heard our regiment was coming back from the Imboden Raid and would be at White Sulphur Springs on a certain day, so we left Monterey and spent the next day going down Jackson River. On the morning of the second day we met the regiment at Warm Springs, Va. We volunteered in Co. B. 25" Va. Infantry. That regiment and the 31" Va. regiment had been taken from R. E. Lee's Army and sent with Imboden's army to W. Va.

Our captain was W. H. Fitchett; Colonel John C. Higginbotham who was the first captain of our company; Brigade Commander, J. M. Jones; Division Commander, Edward Johnson; Corps Commander, General Ewell, the same division and Corps that Stonewall Jackson formerly commanded. We were all under our beloved R. E. Lee, called the Army of Northern Virginia. Our company was called the Upsher Grays. After taking a fine bath in the warm springs we moved on by way of Bath Alum Springs to Buffalo Gap, W. Va. We stopped there a few days and held an election in the army. We elect-

ed Extra Billy Smith for Governor of Virginia to succeed Gov. Letcher. Extra Billy was a Brigadier General and commanded the Brigade that our 25" regiment was in during part of the war. We also elected our Lieut. Colonel Robinson to represent some of our W. Va. Counties in the Virginia legislature. When this was completed we went to Staunton, Va., and took the train for Hanover Junction and then went to Fredericksburg; there we found R. E. Lee's main army. They had just fought the battle of Chancellorsville and we all know what happened there. A day or two before we moved from this place Extra Bill Smith left us and before leaving he made a little speech. He said: "Boys, I am sorry to part with you. You are good soldiers. I like to have good brave fellows around me like you. It makes me feel so darn'd strong." That is all he said. We all cheered him for he was a good fighter. Then the army started on a long march across the Blue Ridge, the beginning of that memorable campaign into Pennsylvania and to Gettysburg. After several days marching we arrived at Winchester, Va., and found General Milroy holding the town. Our corps was the only one that crossed the mountains in that direction. Longstreet's and Hill's corps went to the Potomac river in another direction, so we had to attack Milroy with Ewell's corps. This was in June. On the evening of the first day we began fighting and we continued that night, the next day and the next night, then very early in the morning of the third day the big flag on Milroy's Fort was taken down. We took many prisoners and a quanity of army stores. This was my first taste of battle and I wish you could have seen me dodge the first shell. If a hole had been near I would have disappeared. I would like to impress on your minds that I had a fine brave heart,and a pair of legs that had a wonderful inclination towards carrying my body out of danger, but I succeeded in coaxing them to stay with the crowd.

Here I will tell you of some things that happened during the battle. On the second day our regiment

was deployed on a long line on a low ridge some distance east of Winchester, near the Front Royal Road. We were Sharpshooters. Our company was in front of a large farmhouse and near the noon hour a middle aged woman came out on the firing line and with her there came a beautiful young southern girl 17 or 18 years of age. About a mile to our left a long skirmish line moved slowly down the slopes of the same hill on which we were stationed. We looked across a beautiful little valley and saw a fine body of Yankee Cavalry coming to meet the thin line of skirmishers. The beautiful young girl looked too and began to lament, saying: "Oh, dear, dear, all our poor men will be killed." Then some one told her to look out on the crest of the hill. She looked and saw Stuart's North Carolina Brigade coming out of the woods, a gray line a mile long; on they came closer and closer, then the little line of skirmishers fired a volley and fell back to the main line, on came the Cavalry, on came the low, gray line; suddenly we saw the infantry halt and we heard one mighty volley from their guns. The Cavalry reeled and fled with several empty saddles; then our southern girl became wild with joy, she said: "Do let me hollo." Some one said, "Well, hollo all you want to." She certainly did hollo and clap her hands. The other lady was her aunt. She said to the girl: "Why Annie, ain't you ashamed?" The next morning we went quickly into Winchester. We saw a large old lady on a porch bouncing from one end to the other, clapping her hands and shouting: "Thank the Lord, Milroy is gone." We stayed around Winchester for a few days caring for the wounded, burying the dead, gathering guns and other stuff off the battlefield.

We moved on down the valley to Shepherdstown and here we met a Company belonging to some of our regiments that had secured a leave of absence and were staying at their own homes in the town. We saw a dear mother, sister or wife, come out and meet them and it was good to see the joy of their meeting; but then, perhaps, at the very next house, some

one would go to a dear old mother and speak gently, she would clasp her hands and lift her eyes to heaven, touched with grief, for she knew the ground had closed over her sunny haired southern boy forever. After pasing through that town we waded the Potomac and camped for a day or so on the Antietam Battlefield, then went on through Hagerstown and Greencastle where we saw a pretty young girl standing on a portico holding a small United States flag in her hand. She taunted us with it and some were not courtous to her. We went ahead to Chambersburg and our regiment patrolled the town for a day and a night. It was necessary to guard the place to keep order. I remember I did a fine job guarding a bed of onions just long enough to pull all I wanted for my own use, and I gave some to others who were not so skillful in climbing palings as I was. We went from that town to Shippensburg, and on to Carlisle, Pa., then turned to the right and went to Gettysburg. General Lee gave us orders not to destroy or molest private property. Any farmer could have a guard for his house if he asked for one. I know this to be true for I did that kind of guarding myself. We reached Gettysburg on the evening of the 1st of July. There had been hard fighting before we arrived. We saw some gruesome sights in the railroad cut near where Gen. Reynolds was killed. Men's heads were torn from the bodies, legs and arms torn asunder and horses lying around mutilated. It took courage to face these things. We passed through Gettysburg that same evening and lay in line of battle under the guns on Cemetery Ridge; the next day our division stormed Culp's Hill, and that evening late moved into the Valley of Death, then on the third day while Pickett was making his terrible charge and the battle was raging everywhere, we were holding our position among the rocks under the murderous fire from Little Round Top. My brother Cyrus was badly wounded in his right arm, so I removed him from the battlefield under the fire of the cannons, musketry and bursting of shells. It is due to the hand of a Di-

vine Providence that we were not both killed for the cannon balls bored into the ground so close we thought sometimes we would be covered. I left my brother on the top of the hill and went back to the line of battle. Again it fell on me to take another one of our company off the battlefield, but fortunately I was never hurt. About midnight on the 3rd of July, Gen. Lee began to fall back. We lay all day, the 4th, just a little west of the battlefield when we finally fell back to Virginia. All the wounded had to be left in Pennsylvania and brother Cyrus was one of them; he was taken to Bedloe's Island and David's Island here he stayed until the spring of 1864, when he was exchanged and put on the retired list; until the close of the war he was on farms in Pennsylvania Co., and Rockingham Co. Va., arriving home in June, 1865, a few days before my return.

Some of the Northern people had peculiar ideas concerning us; while we were patrolling Chambersburg, we conversed with people at different places. Some would say: "Why, we didn't think there were so many people in the South." And only a small part of Lee's army went to Chambersburg. At another house while conversing one of them looked closely at us and said: "Why, I didn't know the Southern people looked like our people. You fellows look just like us." Then Bill Lawhorne, a rough fellow and one of our own company said: "What did you think we looked like? Did you imagine we all had horns and tails like wild beasts?" It seemed strange that anyone could know so little about the South.

Now, I will speak of our march back from Gettysburg to Virginia. On the morning of the fifth of July we were called in line and were standing by the roadside when Gen. Lee and most of the higher officers of the army of Northern Va. rode up and stood in a group near us. Gen. Lee said to Gen. Ewell: "You will march in the rear and if the enemy comes up, give him battle and I will go ahead and open the way." We marched in the rear all the way back to Virginia; the enemy in small bodies would attack

our rear every day, but they did us little harm. A laughable thing happened one evening. A big negro rode up on one of the officer's horses to a pump by the roadside where a great many of the soldiers procured water. He was feeling his importance and making himself conspicious when a shot from one of the enemy's cannons very gracefully knocked the pumpstick off. It was a beautiful sight to see that Mr. Nigger taking his leave; about all we could see was a black streak vanishing in the distance. We went ahead for several days with about the same discouragements and finally stopped at Hagerstown, and skirmished with the enemy for several days.

Finally, one evening several of our regiment were detailed to go to Williamsport and bake a quantity of bread, so Bill Lawhorne and myself from Co. "B" went. We found a shed in a lumber yard in the edge of the town where some barrels of flour had been left. We didn't have any vessels for cooking, but we knew a few things about shifting for ourselves, so we went to work with a determination. Bill Lawthorne spread an oil cloth which we used in rainy weather on the ground, piled flour out of the barrel on it, put salt and soda in it and mixed it while I prepared the fire. I gathered pieces of barrel heads and scraps of boards, these I placed on the ground. Bill spread the dough out on them and set the boards in front of the fire. When one side was cooked I would then turn my cake over and bake the other side We soon had a fine lot of bread. It certainly tasted good to us for we weren't troubled with gout on account of luxurious living. While I was baking Gen. A. P. Hill's Corps passed along the road by the fire, so we had to watch the bread continually. We couldn't afford to give them any, our own hungry fellows needing it too badly. One fellow finally slipped one of my best cakes. I tried to forgive him for I knew that he was hungry. That night was very dark and rainy. Toward morning some one told us our regiment was passing through the town. We packed the bread so we could carry it conveniently and waded in

the mud and through the darkness until we found our regiment. On reaching the upper end of the town we could see a long line of men wading in the Potomac River. It was just break of day and it was terrible to see the men in the big river with only their heads above water, but we joined them and continued our march. Orders had been given that the ammunition be kept dry. I placed the cartridge box upon my shoulder and held my load of bread as high above the water as possible. The boys cried out: "For God's sake King, take care of the bread." It was not surprising that they were uneasy about the bread as the water came to the level of my shoulders. However, we crossed safely, many of the boys prayed and some of them used Sunday School words in the wrong place. On leaving home my father gave me a pocket Bible which I carried on my side breast pocket. After reading it I enclosed it in a tight oilcloth case, and though the water submerged my pocket, the outside leaves only were damaged. I number it among my treasures today. Ewell's Corps was the only one that waded the Potomac river. Longstreet's and Hill's Corps with the artilery and wagons crossed on Pontoons below us at Falling Water. The Potomac was rising rapidly when we waded but the water was warm. We rejoiced to be again on Virginia's soil.

We stayed in Martinsburg two weeks during which time we destroyed much of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. After the close of the war I came home over that road, and at Martinsburg I recognized the same rails replaced; they were still red and rusty from being in the fire which we made by piling crossties, laying the rails on top of them and setting the ties on fire; when the rails were red hot the ends would fall to the ground. I almost felt ashamed of myself when I saw them straightened out and I was riding home over them, but such is war.

Gen. Bradly T. Johnson was in command of our Brigade for several months after the battle of Gettysburg, Gen. J. M. Jones being disabled. From

Martinsburg we went by Bunker Hill to Winchester and then from there to Front Royal where we had a little brush with the Yankees. We then went on up the river to near Luray, crossed the Blue Ridge into Madison County, Va., thence to Montpelier Place, President Madison's old home near Orange Court House, where we remained in camp three months. Our camping ground was well located near the orchard which constantly caused us to hunger for apples, when they were sufficiently ripe and roasting ears and beans were ready to tempt us, the officers sent men to patrol the country, and if one of us was caught prowling around without a pass from Bradley T. Johnson, we were arrested, taken before the officers and punished by having to ride a wooden horse several hours each day or some other punishment as disagreeable. I had been running around much before the patrol was started, so one day Henry Hoover, one of my company, said he would write me a pass if I would get some apples. He imitated Gen. Johnson's handwriting, and with my bogus pass I started toward Gordensville. Seeing a big orchard in front of me, I hastened to it and just as I was walking through a big arched gateway the patrol seized me. Knowing each man for they were of our own regiment I was afraid to show my pass, so I sat down on a log and wondered what I could do. Finally taking it from my pocket I handed it to Lieut. Yancy and said, "Here is some kind of a paper I received this morning. I cannot read very well and I thought I would show it to you. After reading the pass he smiled and said, "Why, you dam'd fool, this is a pass from Gen. Johnson. You get back to camp and don't let me catch you out here again." I returned in a round about way, got a few apples and roasting ears and did not go in that direction any more, but across the pike from our camp was a big cornfield with a large quantity of tempting roasting ears and beans, guards were placed in the field and orders read to the regiment while on dress parade. I being on guard duty did not hear the orders read, but had been told

of them; nevertheless, I went one day armed with haver sack and a good appetite with the intention of getting a fine mess of corn and beans and perhaps, some apples. I was getting along nicely when a guard approached from the 50" Va. regiment. Danger surrounded me, but the guard was a good fellow and lucky for me, his own captain was officer of the day in our Brigade that day. I was taken before the captain and he asked me to what regiment I belonged I told him to the 25". He said, "Didn't you hear the orders read to keep out of the cornfield?" I said, "I didn't. His reply was. "Your Colonel is too good an officer not to have had such orders read to the regiment." "I must have been on guard somewhere at the time," I said, which was true. Then the Captain said, "What did you go into the cornfield for anyhow?" I said, "Because I wanted some roasting ears to eat." He said, "Did you get any?" I said, "yes, a few." I showed them to him, he laughed and said, "Oh, you're too honest, go back to your regiment and keep your corn." That was my last thieving trip. We stayed in our camp until October and got well rested, but didn't fatten very much. I suppose indigestion kept us thin.

The family burial ground of President Madison was near our camp. I often walked through the enclosure. The monument erected to his memory is a plain base of granite, something like 8 feet square with a 4 foot square tapered shaft 20 feet high, with James Madison, his birth and death only engraved upon it. A beautiful white slab marks the burial place of his wife.

In October we broke camp and marched to Bristow Station near Manasses on the Orange and Alexanderia R. R. For several days part of our army watched the Yankees while others destroyed much of the Orange and Alexanderia R. R. When the bars were red hot they were bent around telegraph poles. Later we camped for a week or two at Brandy Station near the same railroad. Some of our cavalry had a little skirmish with the enemy before we arrived in

which a few men had been killed. We had been getting our drinking water at a little run and were ordered to stop using that water for they found a dead Yankee lying in the run in the woods a short distance above where we procured drinking water. This caused much discomfort. While in camp Wat Kirk, Bill Jarvis, and myself were ordered to guard the Gen. Jones headquarters. Jarvis was a sergeant. We went on post at evening, knowing we ought to guard the rail fence near, we didn't burn any rails. It was a cool drizzly night, the guard before us had made fire, so we kept a small fire by adding pieces of rails and stumps. Captain Cleary was on the General Staff, he was a tall egotistic fellow and none of us liked him. In the morning he had the three of us put under arrest and sent to the guard house, where we were prisoners for a few days. We were then tried before the Military Court. The judge advocate was our own Captain Fitchett, a fine fellow. Captain Cleary entered the courtroom with a pompous air and read his charge accusing us of burning rails while on guard. Then Capt. Fitchett said to us, "You are privileged to ask questions! The others were silent. Spunking up to Capt. Cleary I asked, "Have you seen us burning rails or disobeying other orders while on post.?" He said, he had not, but he thought we had been. I looked at our judge and he smiled. We were honorably discharged and went back to our companies.

After that we went in camp a short distance below Orange Court House. By this time the weather was beginning to grow cold, and we had nothing so far but small shelter tents, dog tents we called them. We crawled into the tents and spread down an old blanket or oilcloth on the frozen ground, but owing to the hard bed and cold we slept but little. There were three in our tent, one of us, Joe Paugh by name was a big boyish fellow who slept in the middle. I think he had the longest, hardest back and legs of any man with whom I ever slept. In the morning we left our prints in the mud where we had thawed the frozen ground. The latter part of November we went to

Mine Run, and quarreled with some Yankees who had crossed the Rappanhannock River, charging the enemy in the woods near Payne's farm. We soon found their line concealed in some thick red brush, they sprang up within 20 feet of us and fired. My, but the bullets passed affectionately over our heads. A big fellow by the name of Hoy Reger, in front of me saw a gun leveled at him, he cried sharply, "Look out, King," at the same time ducking his head under his cap, the crown of which was stuffed with cotton and stuck out like a rabbit's tail. I dodged quickly behind a tree and had Reger not yelled sharply at me I would have been killed. The next day we made breast works on the hills along Mine Run and the Rebels and Yankee cannonaded one another after the work was completed. That night was very cold and our company stood picket down below the works among the pines. We kept a fire by burning pine knots, and the next morning we were so black from the smoke that we hardly recognized one another. After much cannonading, the Yankees recrossed the river, and a number were killed during the fighting. Then we returned to Orange Court House, and went into camp near the one we left.

Before going further I will tell you about one of the greatest charges I ever experienced, which took place when we were returning from our trouble with the enemy at Bristow Station. After marching all day with nothing to eat except a few roasting ears which we nabbed while going along, we went into camp in the evening in a bad humor, we were hungry and cold and had to keep our fires by piling on limbs and brush. I was unlucky in having the back of my jacket burnt up to my collar. The next morning we were very hungry and there was a seven acre cornfield near our camp, which was guarded at night, when in line ready to march we were ordered to stack arms, then we were commanded, "Right face, Forward, March, Break" and we soon knew what was up. No General ever saw a finer charge for every one of us made for that cornfield. Myself and another

longlegged fellow sailed through the field to the far side and came back pulling ears. We got a fine lot of corn. The charge was soon over, the cornfield completely subdued and no one was hurt. My exertion was useless for the officers made all divide equally. Then we went back to the fire to cook it. We had no cooking utensils near, so we set the ears on end in the fire and built a little pen of sticks around them. When we marched away we could have been tracked for miles by the cobs. Our Brigade of six regiments only was in charge in the cornfield.

The first of December we began to prepare for winter quarters and Gen. Lee located his camp near a large brick church a short distance below Orange Court House. The church was called Pisgah church. therefore, our winter camp was called Camp Pisgah We suffered intensely with the cold it being near Christmas before our shanties were completed. We were along the Rapidan River eight miles away doing guard duty, drilling, cleaning our guns, attending dress parade and many other things necessary to a winter camp; frequently lady relatives made us glad by the presence of their gentle faces. The winter passed slowly and we were glad when the spring of 1864 came with its usual smiles. Our army moved in the direction of Mine Run early in May and rested near where the first battle of the wilderness began. This brings to my memory a neighbor in Upshur county who went with us to Dixie, and a kinder more faithful comrade no one ever had. On the evening of the 4th our rations did not arrive until late in the night and it was necessary to cook them before retiring. Three of us messed together, myself, Jerry Paugh, and Sam Lynch; Sam told Jerry and me to lie down and sleep until midnight. When we woke he had finished the cooking for all. We reproved him for not calling us and he said we were sleeping too soundly to be disturbed. It was a pleasure to come in contact with a man so kind and affectionate.

The next day was the memorable 5th of May, 1864, the beginning of the bloody battles in the Wil-

derness. We were called in line early in the day and met Grant's army on the old stone road leading from Orange Court House to Fredericksburg, there we had a severe battle. Our regiment was always deployed in front of our lines of battle as skirmishers and sharpshooters. A skirmish line is made by a regiment deploying, that is a regiment forms a thin line with each man 5 spaces apart. Our business was to watch the enemy and keep their skirmish line back as long as possible consequently we faced the enemy. If we succeeded in holding them back we were to fall behind the line of the battle and form our regiment, then take our place in line with the others. Soon after we deployed the skirmishers advanced on us. We met them with vim and they fell back, on they came the second time with a double skirmish line. We sent them back again. Just then General Battles Alabanious threw forward a skirmish line to assist us. In a few minutes the foe appeared with a double line of skirmishers and a line of battle. We poured into them with our two skirmishers and they fell back again leaving a few dead. Phill Crites, a big robust fellow in our company, seeing two dead Yankees in front of us, concluded he would examine their knapsacks. It was a mean trick and the officers warned him, but he did not listen and as he was stooping over the dead man he was shot and fell badly wounded. At once four of our Company went to him, Sam Lynch, my dear classmate, also went, not belonging to the ambulence corps it was unnecessary for him to go. I said, "Sam, don't go, but he set his gun against a tree and went and as the four were ready to remove Crites, bullets came from sharpshooters on the other side, and Lynch fell desperately wounded. I loved my comrade so well that I was strongly tempted to try and carry him off, but I knew it meant death. One of our ambulance corps saw the poor boy die where he lay a few hours afterwards, and his death hurt me worse than any other in the war. Soon after Lynch fell, the other enemy came upon us with a double skirmish line and a double line of battle

and our men scattered. We were ordered to fall back in the rear of our line of battle and from our regiment as we usually did, but while we were still stretched out in our long thin line and the enemy was right on us, our Brigade rallied; another line of battle came up to assist us, and the Yankees were badly defeated. Our Colonel was so badly hurt over the way the rest of the Brigade left us on the skirmish line that he refused to stay with the Brigade, so Gen. Ewell told him to take what was left of the regiment and go to Hay's Louisana Brigade. The Company of Zouaves, called the Louisana Tigers, were in one of the regiments in that Brigade and we were with them a few days during which some hard fighting took place. One day two of our Regiments were taken near Germania Ford, along the Rapidan River, by Gen. Long, an artillery General, to do some scouting in the woods and find out, whether or not, the enemy might be in the thicket near our rear. We shelled the woods to some extent and fired a few shots at single horsemen to see them run; then we deployed and tried to penetrate the dense thickets, but we were not successful and returned to the line of battle in the evening. The Wilderness is the place where so many soldiers met the "Unseen Death," as it is called in history. It was rightly named for there was such a wilderness of undergrowth and vines in which the soldiers could hide, that a bullet would often strike a poor fellow and no one could tell from whence it came.

Lee held his position all along the line so that our Army kept moving on the right parallel to Grant's Army as far as Spottsylvania Court House, where we took a position and made breastworks. The part of the breastworks called in history, "The Bloody Angle," was in the shape of a horseshoe and our Brigade occupied the toe. On the evening of the 10th of May a Brigade from Georgia gave way in the wing of the works and those on the left were ordered to assist them in taking their position which we accomplished in a short time. Our Colonel was killed in the battle. When we returned to our place in the An-

gle, some one had left a flat cake while resting against the breastworks where I had stood. We never were overloaded with eatables, so by hard work I stuffed Mr. Flatcake into my knapsack. Some of them laughed at me thinking it might be dirty. I will tell you more of Mr. Cake later. Being in the right side of the toe of the horseshoe, we were in constant danger of being injured by the enemy's fire. On our left every few minutes a shot of some kind endangered us, so we made a row of breastworks behind us and some crosswise which added to our safety. Picketing with the enemy continued until the 12" of May, a misty morning, when just a little after the break of day the enemy attacked us with an overwhelming force. One line came in front which we annihilated another line came and broke over the breastworks at the center of the horseshoe while we were pouring it to the line in front. Standing on the big breastworks in the rear was a long line of Yankee soldiers with bayonets pointing at us, saying: "Boys, Surrender!" They never fired again, but stood looking at us good naturedly. Of course we had to throw down our guns. Our men had run a battery of Artillery in front of the breastworks and before they could unlimber, the Yankees were upon them. The greater number made their escape through a gap in the breastworks, but one small Artillery man coming up the gap without hat and coat, started through the head of the flanking column unarmed and said: "I surrender, Don't kill me." Suddenly a big sturdy fellow by the name of Woodsides belonging to Company "A", of our regiment brought his gun to his shoulder and shot the Yankee. The other Yankee never troubled him for this and that little Artillery man was so glad his life had been saved, he clung to Woodsides' arm like a child. While this was happening a young giant by the name of John Keener, belonging to Company "A", also refused to surrender. I yelled at him to surrender or he would be killed, then some one fired and we saw him throw his arms across his breast and fall on his face. We all thought

he was killed but two weeks later when on a steamer going to Point Lookout,I saw a man lying on blankets on the deck. It was John Keener. I said: "I thought you were killed at Spottsylvania."He said:"I thought so too at first." His girl's picture in his side pocket had miraculously saved him. It was in a case and the bullet that might have penetrated his heart, glanced on the picture and ploughed through the flesh on his breast. What noble creatures the young girls are. Isn't it marvelous how their pretty faces can save a man's life? God bless them. They are precious everywhere.

We were fortunate in not loosing a man in our regiment. That same day one of our men, John Gaitrel by name, a big strong fellow, saw the flanking column coming and made his escape to the rear. The rest of us threw down our guns and were hurried over the breastworks, there in front of our lines we saw dead men, two and three in a pile. Oh, what a pitiful sight. It became necessary to jump over many of them as we hurried along in advance of our captors. They paid a fearful price for us. A short distance from our breastworks I passed a fine manly looking soldier who belonged in the storming column. He was looking at the lock of his gun, when suddenly he staggered and fell at my feet to raise no more. Immediately after we were taken from our breastworks another Confederate line came up and drove out the Yankees. The fight continued all day, but our breastworks were not removed, as we were being taken through the Yankee lines we passed through at least two more lines of battle which had been kept in reserve in order to support the two lines that had attacked us. Those near were disorderly. It seemed as if every fellow thought he should assist in taking the prisoners, 3000 of us to the rear. Myself and others of our Company enraged because we were taken did rash things. With a big sharp knife in hand I cut and slashed around in a disorderly way, until a very young Yankee boy appeared who looked up into my face so kindly and lovingly and spoke so gentle to me

that my foolish anger vanished. He was as pretty as a girl and we became good friends.Dear boy,I wish I knew if he were living today. He said the Jonies were brave and courageous and that the Yankees had left a man on the battlefield for every prisoner they had taken.

I was told that where the flanking column broke through our breastworks, men were piled as many as seven deep, all dead. It was part of our Brigade that occupied that place. We were conducted into an old field where we remained during the night. Here we found the greater number of our Regiment who had been made prisoners on the 5th of May in the wilderness. They were very hungry having had little to eat for four or five days and here is where Mr. Flat Cake came in advantageously. I divided it among old comrades and it appeased their hunger to some extent. We started for Fredericksburg in the morning and on the way we passed through a Brigade of impudent negroes officered by white men who were going to the front. They boasted that they expected to capture the rest of us. Our boys informed them they would find the rest of us waiting which they did to their sorrow, for those same negroes were shoved into the most dangerous places and the Rebels killed them by hundreds without mercy. We reached Fredericksburg, crossed the Rappanhannock river on pantoons and went through King George Co., to Belle Plains, on the Potomac river; here we remained a few days, then by boat were taken to Point Lookout Prison in St. Mary's Co., Maryland. The 20th of May 1864, we marched through the big gate marked in large letters, "Prisoners' Camp." Now our campaigns were ended and for more than a year we were to fight hunger, disease, exposure and cruelty, a gloomy prospect indeed, for thousands passed through that gate who never passed out alive again. I will try to give you some idea of the prisons, the government, food, clothing, guarding, etc. The prison at Point Lookout was located on a narrow piece of ground about one quarter of a mile wide at

the mouth of the Potomac River. Here the river is ten miles in width, the Chesapeak Bay on the other side of the prison more than thirty miles. Our part of this prison embraced 30 or 40 acres of ground surrounded by a ten foot wall which was a strong frame work spiked with two inch plank on the inside, framed in with the wall on the outside, three feet from the top was a parapet or walk for the use of the sentinels. At certain distances on the parapet small shelter houses were erected for the guards. The inside was laid off in streets 20 feet wide running in the direction of the River, they were ditcheed on both sides, and rows of round or sibley tents were placed back on either side of the street. Ten rows of tents each holding eighteen persons were in our camp. A large section was laid off for hospital grounds and for various other purposes. Another section which we called the officers' Bull Pen, the one in which we were placed, was vacant. Officers had been confined there, but were separated from the privates and kept in another Prison during our stay.

Captains, Lieutenants and all high officers were called commissioned officers, all others from sergeants down were called noncommissioned officers, and were left with the Privates. The prison was located by the Bay with several gates leading to it, large open works were constructed over the water 30 or 40 feet for closets, and narrow passages were provided leading to them. At night all gates were closed. The ground was not much above the water level and on account of the winter tides the cookhouses, seven in all were built with the enclosures on foundations 3 or 4 feet from the ground, at the side farthest from the bay ten rows of tents, each row called a division, made a wide approach in front of each cookhouse. I was in the tenth division which was nearest the hospital ground. Several pumps afforded an abundance of clear water, but it had an offensive odor and left a coating on tinware. A dead line two or three hundred yards out in the water was made by driving small logs in the mud with a pile

driver, their ends showing above water at low tide. It was very dangerous to swim beyond this dead line. Many had been shot and not a few killed for very trifling offenses. Two days out of every three we were guarded by a gang of ignorant and cruelsome negroes.

Please do not think that I dislike the negroes as a race. Many of them are my friends, but the negroes who guarded us were not accustomed to having authority over the white people and the defenceless prisoners suffered at their hands. Numbers of scars were left on the frame work of the closets made by negroes firing at the prisoners. The negro guard was very insolent and delighted in tantalizing the prisoners, for some trifle affair, we were often accused of disobedience and they would say, "Look out, white man, the bottom rail is on top now, so you had better be careful for my gun has been wanting to smoke at you all day!" Often their threats came true. Many times during the night, when they quarreled with some poor fellow who had displeased them, we in our tent hugged the ground very closely expecting to hear a bullet sing at any moment. They meddled with many things that did not concern them, always giving their orders in the most insolent manner.

A tragedy took place at the cookhouse near our tent one day. A negro stood near the gate leading to headquarters and one of our prison comrades smuggled a watch into the prison which he tried to sell to this negro. He said to him: "Don't you want to buy a watch?" The negro replied, "Yes, let me see it." Handing the watch to him, the negro leveled his gun, saying: "If you don't get away from here I will shoot you." The man ran and reported to the white officers, a few days later the officers compelled him to return the watch. This made the negro very angry and on guard a few days later he saw the owner of the watch going into the cookhouse with a hundred or more prisoners marching four ranks deep, so he fired at the man. Missing the rank he was in, he fired at every man in the rank next to him, two were shot

through the body, one in the arm and one in the hand. The two who were shot through the body died, the other two lived. One was Joe Bridge of our Regiment who was cared for in a hospital tent near us. A few of the negroes who numbered more than a thousand knew their place and our white guards were well liked. During the summer the Rebels were troublesome in Virginia and many of those negroes were taken across the Potomac to fight. When the news came that numbers were killed the negro women in their tents wailed and mourned, after this they treated us with more respect.

Now I will endeavor to tell you about our food and the manner in which it was served. We were fed by the contractors, who were paid a certain price for each man per day, so it can easily be seen there was room for speculation. These contractors bought damaged rations such as pickled pork, beef, etc., from the government at a low price and they gave us barely enough to keep soul and body together. The food was a little more satisfactory at Point Lookout than at Elmira, New York. It was prepared in the different cookhouses and placed on long tables ready to be carried to the quarters. The meals were served twice a day, at 8 o'clock a. m., and at 3 p. m. A piece of light bread and a little beef or pork, salt or fresh whichever was convenient was served in the morning and evening, bread and soup in messpans. The bread for either meal weighed when baked 3 ounces, the pork weighed about 2 ounces and the beef three ounces, it was often bone and very little meat. Hunger necessitated our eating this tainted food as we had nothing else and the odor was very offensive. The pickled beef was often tainted also, our soup was made either of potatoes, beans, onions or a compound of cabbage, carrots, and other green garden vegetables cooked and pressed into large squares for convenient handling. If the soup was made of potatoes, beans and onions, the potatoes were not peeled and the onions were not sorted and frequently they were spoiled, when the blocks of pressed vege-

tables were thrown in after the meat being cooked it was good, but the quantity allotted to each only sharpened our appetites. Bathing in the bay was a source of pleasure granted us and we certainly took advantage of it. It was thick with bathers every day and it was a great relief to stand on the beach and watch the ships and small craft pass, some with a line and net waded in the water waist deep and caught the big crabs. I sometimes went to the bottom where the water was ten feet deep and found a few oysters to eat, but they were poor and tough in the summer time. When the tide was coming in the water was delightful, at the dead line we sat on the post until the waves were highest, then we rode them to the shore. We enjoyed the bathing until the middle of July, when curious looking things called "Sea Nettles" appeared, they must have had animal life in them for they grew from the size of a penny to that of a breakfast plate, and they looked somewhat like clear jelly, the edge resembled a white scalloped squash, the center being like that of a shallow bowl, appendages nearly two feet long were on the edges and on the extremity of these were small spots cluster ed together. It was amusing to watch the bathers swim under one of these, the sting resembling that of a nettle. They are said to be of the jelly fish family. Many times I attempted to examine them, but upon being lifted out of the water they separate into tiny particles. After a windy night the beach at the edge of the water was slimy where the queer things had been left by the receding tide.

We had a memorable Fourth of July of which I must speak. In the rear of the hospital tents there were several rough wooden buildings which were used as a kind of headquarters for the sergeants and in these buildings all things sent to the prisoners were stored. One of our prisoners, a big jolly fellow, by the name of Wells, was in charge of the things received including clothing, cakes, cookies and various other nice things and many times the prisoners died before receiving them. This 4th of July, while the

men of war vessels in the Bay and the Yankees were celebrating the Fourth, a young comrade by the name of Munt said quietly to me, "Be still about it but come with me this afternoon and we will have a 4th of July treat." We went and fifty or sixty others detected our plan, we fell in line in front of the building where Wells was stationed and as we passed he gave each of us a handful of good cakes. After Munt and myself had received our treat he said, "King, lets go back behind and come up and get another treat." I said, "I am afraid Wells will recognize us." Munt insisted and we went. When we appeared Wells looked at us sharply, seized us and took us into the house. He said, "I will punish you later." We were somewhat frightened, but said nothing and later he came with a large wooden bucket nearly filled with apples and two bottles, but we did not know what the bottles contained then he roared out in a terrible voice: "If you two do not eat every apple in that bucket, I will compel you to drink the contents of these bottles and it will kill you sure." We began eating the apples which were not very attractive but were mellow. We ate and ate and Wells looked at us ocasionally with a terrible expression on his face. Showing the bottles he would say: "Eat them or die." The floor in the room had large openings in it, so we ate a small piece of an apple while Wells was not looking and then dropped the rest of the apple through the floor. A Yankee guard came in and assisted us in disposing of a few, so at last we finished our task, then with a savage look he presented the bottle, saying: "I am going to kill you anyhow." He roared out, "Drink it, I tell you." The guard smiling looked at us. This gave us courage to drink it and it was a bottle of fine pop. He gave another fellow, who had done the flanking like we did, a suit of clothes, so that was our 4th of July celebration and it is one that I will never forget.

Near the middle of July officers came through the prison taking the names of all who would apply for the oath of allegiance to the United States, prom-

ising that those who would apply would be released. Well, about 300 made application, but I am happy to say that your humble servant was not included. A short time after this the 300 marched through the big gate rejoicing. They taunted us because we were left behind, but I will tell you more of the 300 later. On the 27th of July we boarded a little steamer called "Favorite" which took us out in the mouth of the Potomac. There we were put on the big ocean steamer "Continental." Sometime during the night we went through Hampton Roads into the old Atlantic and turned our faces towards New York. We had not been on the ocean long until one after another became sick and we numbered thousands. The ship had three decks above the hold. Sitting on the lower deck dangling my feet down in the hatch way where it was very hot, I was sweating furiously when they lowered over me a large canvass ventilator. I pulled off my cap, opened my shirt bosom and enjoyed the cool air, but contracted a cold that night which came very near costing me my life; strange to say I had taken cold on the measles when about fourteen which effected one lung and left me with a rather weak squeaky voice. Now this cold I caught on the salt water gave me a strong course voice and splendid lungs which I still have. We reached New York harbor and lay at anchor in the mouth of the Hudson River, for nearly half a day from our big trip. We had a good view of the city where all was hurry and bustle, then in the evening we started on the Erie R. R. for Elmira which is 300 miles from Jersey City. The next evening we arrived at Elmira prison, and were assigned respective places. Here the prison was laid off in wards instead of divisions like Point Lookout, and our squads were in Ward 39. The first to meet us were the grinning 300, who had marched to freedom through the big gate at Point Lookout. We certainly did laugh at them; they were there safe and secure with no more freedom then the rest of us. It was all right to take the oath of allegiance to the United States as we did after we had no Southern

Confederacy. The Yankees in general had no respect for a turncoat and those who took the oath were always spoken of with contempt. I am proud to say that I never even thought of taking an oath of that kind until Lee had surrendered and the war was ended. Then it was necessary to take the oath to get home.

The prison at Elmira consisted of thirty-six acres enclosed by a wall constructed in the same way as Point Lookout Prison. It was located a short distance from the Chemung River in Chemung County, New York. The river made a bend in front of the prison, but everything indicated that perhaps a hundred or more years before the prison was there the river had run straight, and later a beaver dam had changed its course. In our pen there was a body of water within banks very much like a river which occasionally became high. The North side of this body of water had a much higher bank than the South side. Next to the river it became stagnated in the warm season and was not healthful. Elmira was located on the west and near the prison; there were hills on the east which kept our minds on the beautiful and majesty of nature. The Elmira prison looked much cleaner and healthier than Point Lookout, and the water was good. It was a pleasant summer prison for the southern soldiers, but an excellent place for them to find their graves in the winter. The plan was different from the prison at Point Lookout. All our quarters were built on the north side of the water, it being higher than the south side which was a blue grass sod and used for small pox hospitals.

We arrived on Aug. 1st, crossing the water by means of bridges. Our camp was situated in the north east quarter of the pen. The regular prison hospital was in the northeast quarter, the big entrance gate on the north side. Baking and cooking was done in a large cookhouse near the water. The inside headquarters were near the entrance of the big gate, a cross street leading to the cookhouse; all other of the streets ran east and west. They were ditched and

thrown up in the center. The hospital grounds contained frame buildings of medium size, tents and smaller buildings for carpenter shops where coffins were made and other houses for the use of the sergeants, and those who were compelled to be in the prison for various purposes. An undesirable building was erected in the middle of the camp for a guard. We lived in low tents for the first three months, there being no houses and we often suffered with cold. The manager arranged the building of the houses two months after our arrival and they were completed near Christmas. They were 100 feet long by 25 feet wide; material rough lumber, sawed blocks were set on end and on these sills and lower joists were placed, then a double floor of rough planks was made sided up with ten foot siding, they were stripped roughly and a few binders used, the roof was very flat made by sheeting the rafters with plank this was prepared and covered with pitch gravel. There was no ceiling over head, a large door was arranged at each end and two windows in the sides, three rows of bunks, one above the other, were built on the sides of the building, they were 6x4 feet with bottom made of rough plank and six inch boards were railed on the outside, to prevent our rolling out, shavings or bedding of any kind was not permitted as the authorities said they produced vermin, but it mattered little to us for we were already well supplied. Two ventilators were placed in each roof which provided for two stoves. At first we had wooden stoves, but they were not satisfactory and were replaced by Burnside Coal stoves. The management was somewhat like that at Point Lookout. The head man inside was a major called Provost Marshall, two captains, assistant Provost Marshall, Lieutenants and Sergeants, assisted him. Our first Provost Marshall was Major Colt, his assistants were Captain Mungery and Captain Peck, they were good men and treated us well,but these officers had nothing to do with feeding, clothing and housing us. This was done by contractors, whose ambition was to make money, they

were cruel and caused much suffering. In the tent one night three of us, myself and two boys from Alabama, Burd Messer and Jerry Dingler were sitting on our blankets talking, and suddenly some one in front called out sharply, "Halt" two shots followed tearing through our tent just above my head. The three of us threw ourselves on our backs instantly, and the next morning revealed that the man who fired the shots was an over bearing Lieutenant whom we disliked. At another time Jerry Paugh, one of our companions discovered that some of the boys in our ward planned to escape. Our row of tents was the nearest to the wall and these fellows dug a hole in the bottom of the tent extending to the outside of the prison, a distance of 25 or 30 feet, by means of haversacks they emptied the dirt in the water without being detected. When all was in readiness a few whistles served as a signal for those who desired to exit. Five escaped, two of these later were caught. Others would have ventured the following night, had not the officers been informed.

Our rations were better after we arrived at Elmira, but they soon decreased. We entered the cookhouse by wards, being 42 in all. Soup was placed on long tables in mess pans. Bread and meat was served in the morning, bread and soup in the evening. Marching to the tables two ranks deep, the head of one column stopped at the first place, then the column separated half of them going on each side of the table, each man stopping at the next place and so on down the line. By the time the last man reached his place the first one was leaving, each man was obliged to furnish a vessel in which to carry his soup it being hot and we were given no time to let it cool. Those who could not carry it with them did without soup. Many kinds of vessels were used some had canteens with the neck broken off, others had old tin cans, coffee pots, tin buckets or often a very small wooden bucket which a prisoner by the name of Morgan made to sell and frequently some shiftless fellow had nothing so punished himself trying to swallow

the hot soup. In winter on very cold mornings what a sight we were starting to the cook house for our food; Each ward had a head man called a war serseant, he went to the cook house morning and evening to learn when to bring his ward, usually about 200 or 240 men. After securing the information he called out, "Fall in 39 and get your rations." We went in a trot, canteens, buckets, tin cans, coffee pots, rattling, old rags and strings and long unkept hair, dirt and grey backs, cheek bones projecting for there was very little of us except skin and bones. Our legs were spindling and weak. Here we went over the frozen ground and in crossing ditches some poor fellow frequently fell. We were obliged to leave him struggling to gain his position as our time was limited. This is only a few of the facts. It has often been said that the northern people treated and fed their prisoners well. I wish it were true, but during my imprisonment which was more than a year, I never saw any of the good treatment, except from the old veterans, the men who had been to the front and had seen service in the army were kind.

Tainted meat appeared more frequently and our pieces of bread was perceptibly smaller. The size and weight of our rations, as told heretofore is exactly correct, for many times I measured my piece of bread both in width and thickness. It was very uniform in size, exactly as thick as the distance from the end of middle finger to the first joint inside and just as wide both ways as the length of a table knife blade, this being 5½ inches wide and 1½ inches thick. Our meat ration was very little smaller and often we could see through the soup to the bottom of the pan. At times the officers discovered some dirt or misbehavior near one of our wards, then all the ward was given small rations as a punishment for what one or two had done. We called these morsels of bread detailed rations because men, who were put on detail at cleaning streets or something of the kind, were give small pieces of bread and this was all they had to eat while working. While they were being punish-

ed we nearly starved. In the later part of the winter crackers were used in place of soft bread, we enjoyed them but for some reason they were not healthful, causing a stubborn diarrhoea and many deaths resulted. I was in the hospital myself a month with the disease. Weakness and starvation had caused me to lose my sight, consequently often times when wandering some distance from our ward spots appeared before my eyes and I was dependent upon some kind comrade to lead me home. The blindness left me as I grew stronger. Others suffered the same way. Many times a poor fellow staggered along until his old shaky legs failed to support him, then he staggered until he was on his feet again with a ghastly smile trying to bear it bravely. It was touching to see the poor, ragged gaunt, half famished, much abused, noble fellows trying to be cheerful through it all. Dear old comrades in misery, how often do I remember you and our friendship. Had all been conducted as well as the government of the prisons, we could have had no cause to complain. The best treatment came from the citizens, those at home and the contractors. In addition to the other officers there were ward sergeants, who were our prisoners. One of their duties was to examine all letters coming to or going from the prison; also every cent of money sent to the prisoners was credited in a big book, and should we find by reading our letters that money had been sent we secured a written order for everything we intended to buy. We never saw any money but there was a Sutler store inside the pen where we made our purchases. First, we ascertained how much was to our credit by examining the big book, then a clerk filled out an order blank something like this: "This was the Stutler's name." Demorest, let J. R. King have 15 cts in apples, 10 cts cabbage, 20c onions, 10 cts flour, and so on. After receiving the articles we balanced the account to see how much was left to our credit. We had but little money and prices were high; flour five cents per pound, meal the same, onions 15 cents a pound, cabbage 10 cents, small ap-

ples one cent each, tobacco 15 cents for a small thin plug, and the man charged to suit himself. Money letters were cried in a public place and it was necessary to answer several questions before it was considered safe to deliver the letter. The people at home never knew how we suffered in prison. If we attempted to tell it in our letters, the Censor saw that they were not mailed. The assistant Provost Marshalls, Captain Munger and Captain Peck, and several under officers looked after the inside of the prison. They were responsible for the sanitary condition and the management of the hospitals, cookhouse, the wards, the dead house, burrying the dead and other things. The ward sergeant's duties were to conduct his men to their meals, call the roll, give reports to headquarters concerning his ward, make out requisitions for clothing, coal, etc. There were nearly 1,-000 prisoners at Elmira one time; sometimes less and sometimes more. During the winter those who came from the South felt the cold exceedingly and died from pneumonia. Our clothes were poor. The pants I had when arriving at Elmira were in such a bad condition that for a long time I wore nothing but my underwear. However, when the cold weather appeared I was glad to welcome old pants again and after much patching they were a great comfort. In the late winter, out-of-date government coats were presented to us for overcoats: for some reason unknown to us the tails had been cut unevenly,one side being a foot long and others extending only a few inches below the waist line. They helped to keep us warm, but should we have been out in the world in such costume, one might have mistaken us for scarecrows eloping from the neighboring cornfield. Oilcloth and two blankets was the covering in our bunks, with a big snow outside and the bitter wind raging around the plank building and whistling in at the cracks. We didn't dream of comforts and many of us had very poor shoes. Mine were ready to be cast aside and I did not get a new pair until the last day of February. While in the house I wrapped my feet in old rags

which kept them warm, but in the late winter we were compelled to stand in the snow every morning for roll call, consequently my feet and shins were badly frozen. In the spring they had the appearance of a gobbler's legs and it was many years after I returned home before they were entirely cured. Many besides myself had frozen feet. The man who looked after the fires made only two fires in 24 hours. Each ward had two stoves. The first fire was made at 8 o'clock in the morning, the other at 8 P. M. Near noon and midnight we were comfortable, but during the twelve hours between fires when the temperature of the stoves lowered we often suffered with the cold. A dead line nailed to the floor three feet in circumference surrounded the stoves. Of course we could not cross the dead lines and often a petty officer entering on a cold evening found some of the ragged shivering men standing too near the fast cooling stove, would become enraged and would run cursing, striking right and left through the crowd, little caring who received the blows or what he did. One day a poor fellow was standing near the stove with an old blanket thrown about his shoulders, held at the throat by an enormous safety pin made from a piece of large wire. The long sharp point of a pin extended through the hook which held it in place. The man of authority struck a swinging blow at the poor fellow when his hand came in contact with the point of that big pin which tore his fingers unmercifully. But it cured him of his fighting propensities. Punishment often resulted from trifling offences and of course we dared not defend ourselves. Some of the men in our ward were powerful men. One was a very tall sergeant who lived in Elmira. His duties kept him inside the prison continually and we called him Long Tom. It gives me pleasure to speak of him for he had a kind heart and was a favorite of every one. He was called our coal sergeant, often when the weather was intensely cold and our fires were low upon request our big friend would get us coal if possible. Much sickness prevailed among the prisoners. In the

latter part of the winter many came from near Mobile Bay and brought with them small pox. There were more than forty cases in our ward, and many died. When seven years of age I was vaccinated and although surrounded with it I escaped, there were also many cases of pneumonia, measles and thousands of us were afflicted with the stubborn diarrhoea. The poor fellows died rapidly, despondent, homesick, hungry and wretched, I have stood day after day watching the wagons carry the dead outside to be buried and each day for several weeks 16 dead men were taken through the gate. While the prison was occupied by us which was about one year it was estimated that 3000 men died. The physicians were very good but it was impossible to save all. At one time scurvy was among us. There were not many deaths, but it caused much suffering. I was among the victims. It frequently attacked the mouth and gums, become so spongy and sore that portions could be removed with the fingers. Others were afflicted in their limbs, the flesh became spotted and the pains were almost unbearable. The remedy was raw vegetables and a medicine called chalk mixture. Our dead were buried outside by a detail of 16 or 17 prisoners. The name of the company and Regiment of the dead were written on a piece of paper and put in a tightly corked bottle and burried with the corpse, all were buried in that way. Their caskets were made in the pen by prisoners detailed for that purpose. During the early spring the 40th, 41st and 42nd wards were converted into hospitals. We all decided beds made of shavings would be a luxury, so every fellow that was able procured a sharp knife and a pine board and I doubt if the world ever saw such a universal whitling in so short a time. All tried to possess a comfortable bed, but in a few days the Provost Marshall inspected our quarters and ordered every shaving burned. They advocating that the shavings would breed vermin, but we had already been made very uncomfortable by their presence. Near the cookhouse there were vessels for heating water, but few

of us could get soap and consequently the few clothes we had never were washed. The prisoners passed the time making trinkets. Capt. Munger and Capt. Peck, secured the material and after the articles were completed they sold them in the city for the best price possible, always remitting the money. In passing through the prison one would see a boisterous lot playing cards or some other game, numbers making rings out of Gutta-percha buttons and riveting sets on to them of real silver which the captains had purchased, others were making pretty trinkets out of bone, such as tooth picks and seals for watch chains, with birds, squirrels and other figures designed on them. Some made watch chains out of horsehair with single links, with two links interlocked and others with three links interlocked making a round chain. This was done with horsehairs and two common needles. We took a board 18 inches long and 4 or 5 inches wide, near one end a small hole was made into which a flat post a foot in length with a little pole near the top was placed, in that hole was a little round tapered stick running almost to a point. The stick was as large around as we desired the links of the chain inside, after taking the coarse hair from the horses' tails, we placed a small board on a chair and sat on it with the post between our knees, the little stick pointing to us, threaded the needles on both ends of the horse hairs, then make the little links around the stick, slide the needles each way under the link across the hair, and worked the bottom hole stitch around the center of the link, and then interlocked as many links as we wanted. With little practice very prety chains could be made. Others in our pen made fans out of white pine wood, the board was cut in the shape of a paddle with a fancy handle, then the part which formed the paddle was notched and cut into thin slices with a very sharp knife. The wood was softened with warm water and then the slices bended like a fan, different colored ribbons were worked through the notches and the ends tied in a bow around the handle. They were very pretty,

but frail. One man made a small parasol on the same plan. I saw Capt. Peck, carrying it around one day. I suppose he found a purchaser for it. Another man made a rude engine. One day I gave him a cracker to see it run, that was the admittance. Many wore green shades over their eyes on account of the blazing sun on the sand, tents and water, some of the managers sowed patches of oats which was restful to the eyes.

I will tell you something of the many punishments inflicted on the soldiers; one was wearing the barrel shirt, the big pork barrel with wooden hoops was used, one end was out, a round hole was cut in the other end large enough for a man's head to pass through. The barrel was put over the body by two men leaving the head sticking out through the hole in the end. This he would have to wear two hours before noon and two hours afternoon with a guard behind to keep him in action. Then crosses were nailed on the sides of the barrel on which the man's offense was painted in big black letters. Sometimes it was a lie; othertimes theft, so here promenaded the man, the barrel, the crosses and the guard; one cross said: "I am a liar." Another said: "I am a thief." This continued day after day. Capt. Whiton, the boss of the cookhouse, had a fat dog which was very friendly and one day was missing. So the Captain found upon investigation that two hungry fellows had killed his dog. Enraged with anger he had the two men taken to headquarters, barrel shirt put on them and dog eater painted on the cross. The prisoners ate every rat they could find and it is well for the rat I didn't find any. They smelt very good while frying. Sometimes men were bucked and gagged or tied up by the thumb for punishment, which was the most cruel of all punishments. I would not punish a dog in that way.

Some enterprising fellow built a large frame work outside near the big gate and not more than fifty feet from the wall. The building had three floors besides the ground floor and was called the observatory. There was no roof and it was built for the

sole purpose of observation. One on the upper floor had a fine view of our prison and prices were regulated according to the floor on which they stood. The building was forty feet in height. When the weather was pleasant a great many went to the top to look at us. On a beautiful late spring day there was a number of nicely dressed ladies and gentlemen on the top floor. Our provost marshall was sitting on the floor below when presently there came a big negro among the ladies. He shoved them aside and squared himself to get a good look at us. He was finely dressed and apparently thought himself a very important character. We did not like his attitude so a number of the men groaned at him, hissed, hooted making all sorts of expressions about his impudence but he stood reared back and paid little attention to them. Then the Major got up immediately, went up stairs, took the negro by the shoulders, drew his sword, turned him around and marched him down and out. The negro wanted to argue with the Major but it was useless. Of course we gave the Major a big cheer which seemed to please him. I never saw but one negro guard while at Elmira. He was a fine looking negro who stood guard sometimes in our pen. He behaved like a gentleman.

After warm weather came we had many visitors, often ladies. Some of them spoke pleasantly and were well behaved, while others were impudent and insulting. I remember one day Colonel Moore's son came in our pen with a few young girls, (Colonel Moore was commander of the post), his son was a foppish young fellow and one of the girls overdressed and attracted him. While passing through our ward, with her dainty fingers she tipped up her rustling silken skirts and passed along with an effected air and a disdainful look on her countenance, saying, "Oh, the nasty, dirty, ignorant, beastly Rebels, how filthy they are," and on she continued with a peculiar air, while some of the girls gave us kindly words and looks and were embarassed by her rudeness; but she was punished for being so unlady like. One of

our number, Bish Fletcher, a daredevil, took the opportunity as the girl passed by him to present her with some body lice, 'Grey Backs", we called them. Two sisters of charity visited the prison leaving each a religious tract published by the American Tract Society, and as they passed they treated us with a smile and a kind word. They were real ladies.

I do not want to leave the impression that every prisoner was sick, poor, ragged and weak like the majority of us, for there were many who escaped sickness and numbers who were kept at detail work. Those who worked were fed much better, but of course the majority of us had to work. We had a ray of sunshine occasionally; in the latter part of the winter my good sister, Elizabeth, and my kind parents sent me a box containing biscuits, butter, a piece of bacon, dried apples and a cake. It was all very nice, but unfortunately just before the box arrived I was sick and had no appetite. I ate very little of the contents of my box which was a curiosity to the prisoners. When it came they gathered in a great circle about my bunk and Mr. Breen, a rich iron merchant from Georgia, made a speech to the crowd regarding my dear sister's hands which had prepared it and how my dear parents had remembered their boy in the far away prison. Jaco L. Hale, a large robust man, a Virginian, and one of the "Gray Devils", a company belonging to one of the regiments in the Stonewall Brigade, used the bunk under mine. He was kind to me and was always hungry. I said to Mr. Hale: "Don't you want some butter and bread?" "Yes, sirree," the big fellow answered, and it did me good to watch him sit on the edge of my bunk and eat biscuits and butter. He was a big bony man and a biscuit soon disappeared between those massive jaws. I gave him much of my precious box. He was always my powerful protector and was the last man to whom I spoke in the prison before leaving. Dear old fellow, he had a wife and children at home and was ever the protector of the weak. Prisoners whose homes were within the Yankee lines

could receive money at different times and I always got credit in the big book at the headquarters. Everything was so high at the Sutler store we could not get much but it helped to keep the wolf from the door. Some of the prisoners bought and made much for sale so for five cents one could be satisfied for a while. A market place was located near one end of the cookhouse where the prisoners congregated on certain days and tried to sell numberless things to one and another. They sold rings, watch charms and many other trinkts made by the prisoners and besides these men would cry their articles on the market. Some tried to sell eatables. We called a piece of the loaf, cut off the crust end, a "Keno-ration", by reason of a game of chance some of the men played called "Keno". In the game when a certain number was called out the lucky one would cry out: "Keno-o-o". So at the cookhouse when one got a heel ration he called in a loud voice: "Keno-oo.". In the market some would cry: "Here is your keno ration with five chews of tobacco on it for five cents." Still another, "Here's your two rations of meat and ten chews of tobacco on it all for ten cents," and so on. It was a strange medley of things in progress that could never have been seen elsewhere, but little buying was done. Many traded rations. Money was to scarce with which to make purchases. Hunger often caused people to do desperate things. I myself often watched for the bones, after the meat had been eaten off. I got up many times in my bunk with a bone and after knawing the soft ends, sucked at the bone for hours at a time. I wasn't the only one. No bones went to waste as long as there was any substance left on them. One morning while we were eating our beef ration, Dan Singleton, who occupied one of the top bunks, cried out while holding a small rib in his hand, " Look here boys, here's a fine piece of mule meat." The ribs we were eating were all alike, being round and smaller than the ribs of cattle; the cow's ribs are flat as every one knows. The meat was good and we could have relished several more mules had the opportun-

ity been presented. A few of the under officers were quartered in a little house on a steep bank of a creek. They cooked and ate in front of the house, and here the cook emptied his dishwater which sometimes contained a little meat and bread and I often saw two men on either side of the greasy place scrambling for the crumbs as the dishwater rushed down the bank. It was pitiful. Many men, once strong, would cry for something to eat. I know from experience. A few more of us could have worked in the carpenter shop had we agreed to take the oath of allegiance to the United States, but we refused. Our wages would have been 5 and 10 cents per day according to our capabilities; this didn't tempt me. A day or two after the lamentable death of our President, Abraham Lincoln, the inside officers approached us with a paper telling us that all who would say they were sorry for the President's death would be released first. Not many said they were sorry and those who did stayed there as long as anybody else. I did not say I was sorry and when I came out I left thousands in; yet of course the whole nation was grieved over his death, but we did not care to express our sorrow in that way. However, it was sad to hear the bells tolling in the city when the news came that the President was dead. When Gen. McClellan and Abraham Lincoln ran for president, the majority of the prisoners favored McClellan. They cheered for Little Mac, and one fellow drew the picture of Abraham Lincoln mauling rails and McClellan marching to the White House. Little Mac was very popular in New York.

Then a flood came in the Chemung, or Gioga River as some called it. There had been much snow during the winter and early in March the thaw caused high water. The snow melted rapidly and soon the little Chemung was raging. The water came into our prison higher and higher, and in a short time the small pox hospital across the creek had to be abandoned. The water increased and in a few hours it reached nearly every house in the prison. The lower bunks were submerged and the second row was

threatened. We were surrounded by a wilderness of water. A great part of the prison wall was gone and we could see about half of the cookhouse extending above the water. In every direction men could be seen hustling around in boats trying to save things. The hospitals were flooded and all the sick had to be taken into the city. The dead house was on a little higher ground therefore the dead were not washed away. We were confined in the higher bunks for a day or two with nothing to eat or drink but the dirty river water. After the water receeded men came into our wards through the doors in row boats, passing near where we were "roosting". They gave us something to eat. My, but it tasted good! In transferring the sick from the hospitals to the boat, often they fell into the cold water. A poor fellow came out of the hospital next to our ward. He tried to walk a short plank which had been placed from the hospital to the boat, carrying his blanket and some old ragged clothes which belonged to him. Trembling and tottering with weakness, as he stepped on the plank, the boat vaciliated and the poor fellow staggered, threw up his arms and went headlong into the water. I feared he would drown, but he was rescued and shivvering was taken away in the boat. I have no doubt it caused the man's death. As soon as we could with safety we waded out to the highest pump in the prison, which was near the deadhouse, to get some water. On my way to the pump I noticed several old blankets near my feet. Looking closer I discovered a number of dead men concealed under them. The high water had prevented the people from taking them to the graveyard. The walls were rebuilt and in a week or so our old prison was in its natural condition. After the overflow I noticed several extremely large ells lying dead in the water. One day while the cleaning was in progress a petty officer of some sort had four or five men under him working at a crossing. Just as the little platform or little crossing had been nearly placed I happened along and this petty officer was bossing, puffing and swearing at

the men. He issued a mighty order to the prison that no man should cross the platform until it was completed. Ignoring the order I crossed and as I was landing on the other side this great man caught me by the shoulders, shoved me roughly towards a Yankee guard who happened to be near and said: "Here, take this man to the guard house and put a barrel shirt on him." The guard asked no questions but conducted me to the guard house and in the afternoon I was wearing the barrel shirt. The Yankee guard at headquarters said in a low voice to me "If I were you I would saw wood for the cookhouse and you will not have to wear the barrel longer." Next morning I told them that I wanted to saw wood, so the old measly pork barrel and I parted company forever. I sawed wood a few hours every day for nearly a week. Major Beall came to the guard house to take the place of Major Colts as Provost Marshall. When I was brought before him he said: "What are you here for?" I said: "For nothing at all." He turned to the jailor and said: "What are the charges against this man?" The jailor after looking at his book said: "No charges." Looking at him sternly the Major said: "Let this man out. What is he here for?" I made my departure never to return.

As the spring passed the number in our wards decreased. At roll call there was no answer to nearly a third of the names. Many had died but early in the spring about 300 of the sick had been sent south to be exchanged. I think the government had intended to send the most of us back to Dixie in the spring had the war not closed, but when Gen. Lee surrendered we then knew that those who lived would return to Dixie. There was great rejoicing and ringing bells at Elmira when the news came that Lee had surrendered. After that we received better treatment from the Yankees and were not guarded so closely. Of course we felt badly when we heard that our beloved Gen. Lee had surrendered, for we knew our noble Army of Northern Virginia would hereafter be only a memory. I am proud to say that I once belonged to the Army of

Northern Virginia and marched and fought under the illustrious Robert E. Lee, who, when he had to go down, went down bravely. We started out for what we thought was right and stayed with it faithfully to the bitter end.

I want to speak of some of the characters in our prison who were very interesting. One fellow whom we called Shocky,seemed to have a mysterious influence over the Yankees. He was always well dressed and apparently loyal to the South, but it was always a mystery to us how he could go over the wall at a certain place at anytime he desired and always be respected by the guards. We thought it possible that some free masonry was connected with it. Five of the young Virginians also seemed to be more favored than the rest of us. Among them was Bill McGruder, Bill Hale and a Georgian called Nick Carnochan; the latter pronounced his name Conahan. These young fellows enjoyed many privileges denied the others. Then there was "Old Buttons", a man who sewed buttons on promiscously to show every battle or skirmish in which he had been. I saw the old fellow die while he and I were in the hospital. We had "Old Blue Ridge" too, a man of gigantic size who wore a home-made blue coat trimmed in various places with fringes, who with all his eccentricties was very kind. Old Pickett, the Florida fisherman, watched from morning till night for the chews of tobacco others had thrown away. He threw them into his mouth as though his life depended upon it. There were many remarkable men with us, of whom I would like to speak but time will not permit. As the summer drew near we all became restless and were longing for home. Parnell from South Carolina had been employed around headquarters as a messenger boy. As I sat in my bunk despondent and hungry one evening early in June, Parnell appeared, saying in a low voice: "King, you are going out on the next load. I heard your name called today at headquarters. Be still and do not tell anybody but get ready." I asked who else was going from our ward. He said only

four: myself, Hoy Reger, Andrew Winster Reger, who was one of my own company in Dixie, and himself. Elated over the news I commenced to get ready. My pants were ragged and dirty. I had an old U. S. blanket and ten cents in money. I went to Bill Goans, who was handy with the needle, and asked him if he would make me a pair of pants out of the blanket. He wanted 25 cents for the job, but I told him I had but 10 cents in the world and that I was to start home on the next load. He hesitated, then said: "All right. I will do it, as you are going home." They were better than the ones I wore but I believe Wanamaker would have made a better fit. All our comrades were soon informed that we were going home and we did not try to keep it a secret. As soon as Mr. Hale, a friend of mine, knew we were going he said: "Come and sit down. I want to give you a shave before you leave. He fixed me up the best he could. Then in a day or two we were taken out, measured and our complexion taken down on paper. The next morning 300 of us were taken to the cookhouse and while standing together with our right hands raised the oath of allegiance to the U. S. was administered. Then we were given two days rations, our paroles handed to us and we were ready for the journey. I will never forget the march from the cookhouse to the big gate. All the prisoners who were left behind congregated near the street as we went out. No battle scarred veterans ever marched to victory prouder than that ragged, poorly fed, miserable 300 which passed through the big gate never to return. Many of the poor fellows left behind waved us farewells, for but few ever met again. The last familiar face I remember as I went out was that of Mr. Hale, my best friend. He waved his hand and said: "Goodbye, King" This was the tenderest goodbye for me of all. As I write today the memories of that prison, our suffering, many old comrades I knew well, all rush to my memory so vividly that I seem to live it all over again. It brings a sadness to my heart that I can hardly shake off at times.

We waited in the city until afternoon before taking the train for Baltimore and while there I sold an old blanket I had left for 40 cents and that was all the money with which I had to buy anything to eat on the journey. My two days rations I drew before leaving the prison were so small that I ate all before I passed through the gate, so after getting 40 cents for the blanket I spent 20 cents of it for bread and cheese and ate the most of that before taking the train. The U. S. government gave us free transportation home as far as we could travel by rail or water. In the evening we started for Baltimore on the Pennsylvania North Central R. R. We went through Williamsport, Sunburg, Harrisburg and several other towns and passed long trains of Yankee soldiers going to New York to be discharged. They cheered us as they passed and our train stopped outside of Baltimore for a few minutes. Above us were some women in a garden which had fine onions in it and upon asking for some a negro girl threw us a few. They were what we called clove onions and were fearfully hot. We ate one or two of them and kept the others. In Baltimore while waiting at the Band Depot all day before getting through to WestVirginia,I was sitting in the Camden Street station eating one of my hot onions when I noticed some ladies looking at me. I thought probably they were admiring the fit of my new pants, but later one said kindly: "Poor fellow, he looks pitiful." Then I discovered that they thought I was crying and were sympathizing with me. I concluded I would eat more onions, as it was comforting for some one to look at me kindly. I ate my supper that evening at the Soldier's home near the station and I can assure you that I did not leave that table hungry. We took the train in the evening for Grafton, W. Va., and reached there the next day. I spent that night with my Uncle, my Father's brother, John M. King. The next day I went to Clarksburg and from Clarksburg home. I walked 36 miles that night, Hoy Reger and myself. Being timid to approach the house, we slept in a pasture field. The next day we

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 001 034 616 2

went by way of Buckhannon and parted at the mouth of Turkey Run. I crossed the river at Hyer's Mill and arrived home in the evening, finding all alive and well. I will not try to tell about our happy reunion. There will never be another so happy until we shall meet up there where God will never let us part.

Brother Cyrus is sitting in front of me as I write. I have a beautiful home, children and grandchildren who are tall big men. In a few weeks I will be seventy-four and am hale and hearty and I thank our good master for it all.

In conclusion I will say the war is over. We have peace and prosperity. The North and South are united, but the South is our South. I love it. My heart is with the South and nobler women never lived than our women of the South and there never was in any country nobler women banded together than the Daughters of the Confederacy for the work which they have undertaken. Dear Children of the South, U. D. C.'s, may the kind hand that led me through battles and prisons safely lead everyone securely through the battle of life to a happy old age. To you all I send a greeting. This imperfect sketch was written near Roanoke, W. Va., Feb. 23, 1916.

John R. King